

Connections — An Overview

The author discovering one of his early preservation skills training projects (Worthington House at Monocacy National Battlefield), is holding up well, 15 years later.

Toms' grandfather, Ignazio "Tom" Vitanza, leading a stone masonry project in Cold Spring, New York, circa 1930.



For those readers actively engaged in the preservation of historic structures, this issue of *CRM* features emerging points of view which are bringing vigorous new ideas to our chosen field. By actively engaged, I mean dealing with trades- and craftspeople on a daily basis, solving all the ritual dilemmas of in-the-field construction, and puzzling through the complex maze of preservation philosophy and construction realities; trying to get it to fit together and make a successful project as well. The concepts and proposals which are expressed in these articles come from those intimately involved with the preservation of heritage structures—preservation professionals (architects, conservators, preservationists, managers) and specialists in the building trades and traditional craft skills. This community of leaders are doing their very best to create and maintain those vital and future-oriented jobs in preservation trades and crafts as viable career options and lifestyle choices.

The ideas brought forth in this issue of the *CRM* are honest, passionate, thought provoking, and sincerely concerned with the subject "Preservation Trades and Crafts—Working in Preservation & Fostering the Trades." We have encouraged these views because they contain some of the best thinking in preservation today; especially frontline preservation, in-the-trenches preservation. It is a different world than that presented in many other forums.

The subject being developed here has yet to be dealt with in a conclusive way by the very

industry so dependent upon it. As in any topic-oriented

journal, there is the danger that articles presented offer a one-sided view of things. In this issue of *CRM*, the reader will find many varied opinions coming from very different realms within the preservation world, those not usually heard from. We have asked the authors to focus on the critical nature of the relationship between the head and hand, and despite different backgrounds there is a commonality—they are connected.

Look closely and find the connections between articles, connections which are sieved through the various viewpoints. Program administrators, contractors, material conservators, stonemasons, woodcrafters, preservation interns, architects, and landscape architects have all spoken eloquently of their concepts, proposals, and calls for action. People who work with trade unions and craft guilds, maintenance professionals and building managers, from within the National Park Service and from the many supporting organizations, all have a connection with preservation. Let's explore this connection together.

Several of the articles have been authored by representatives of organizations that co-sponsored the first International Preservation Trades Workshop. The very gathering of this preservation-based trade and craft community is a significant event. People who have devoted their careers to the development of programs and methodologies for fostering the future of these skills are creating powerful networks. Many of the co-sponsors are currently working with the National Park Service through cooperative agreements or other innovative partnering documents. We are working with them and others who have committed themselves to diversify the ways traditional preservation trades- and crafts-oriented persons are trained. We are forging partnerships, building new communities, being creative and solving problems, asking questions—challenging, training and learning from each other.

Recently, my dad gave me an old photo of my grandfather, one I had never seen before. My grandfather was a stone mason and I have seen some of his work, but had never seen him in the process of working; there is a lot to look at in that photo. He was a recent immigrant and had numer-

ous obstacles to overcome in adjusting to his life in this country, but he was immediately sought after. No matter his trouble with the spoken and written language; one look at his work and people knew he was an accomplished mason. Much of his work is still in existence. When you look at it, you can see the quality of the work and the skill that went into building; the attention to detail comes through even in the photo. It is as timeless and irreplaceable as the work of every good tradesperson. After skipping one generation, I look around and see a brother in the masonry business and I'm an architect; both of us get very dirty in our jobs and wouldn't have it any other way. I'm glad there is a connection across the generations there. We're proud of the work we do; we're proud of the connection.

The value of skilled trades- and craftspeople cannot be overlooked. They are the essence of preservation, they are the front line. Without skilled, creative, and thinking building trade specialists it doesn't matter what the intent of the managers or designers is; nothing would be achieved. Several articles that follow look at the societal worth we have placed on saving cultural places and the seeming inequity of value placed on the workers; this is a very big concern. We are

hoping this CRM will begin a dialogue. There are many questions here which need to be explored, many questions left open for discussion and debate. Preserving cultural resources remains a primary element and mission of the National Park Service. As Director Stanton says, "We expect to hear more from everyone involved."

The Preservation Trades Workshop has provided a venue for networking and community building, for demonstrating and learning from the talented artisans, and skilled crafts- and tradespeople who work with traditional building methods. One of our greatest achievements will be the future generations who have increased knowledge and the commitment and skills to conserve our national heritage. Is there a better way to learn?

Spend some time exploring this CRM. Find the common ground. Discover the connections between head and hand. Participate in the future!

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H. Thomas McGrath, Jr.

Qualification Standards for the Trades?

This past June, the National Park Service issued a proposal for review and comment to substantially revise the Secretary of the Interior's Historic Preservation Professional Qualification Standards. The new proposed standards address 13 professional fields related to historic preservation. Each of these professional disciplines are specifically mentioned in the National Historic Preservation Act. Additionally, the 13 disciplines are directly associated with an academic degree and, therefore, are defined as "professional." These new proposed preservation standards do not address the qualifications of the "preservation technicians" or preservation tradespeople who perform the work of applying the preservation treatments to our historic buildings. The proposed National Park Service standards offer a strict interpretation of the intent of Congress with respect to qualification standards only for professionals. I feel strongly that there

should also be qualification standards for the preservation trades. Should the preservation community support a system that allows anyone who can pick up a hammer, trowel, or paintbrush show up at the job site to perform the labor of preservation, as long as they are supervised by a qualified professional? The intention of the Historic Preservation Act is currently being interpreted for professionals only because the preservation trades are not specifically identified in the legislation. The question, therefore, to ask is: "has the time come for the preservation industry to address the lack of qualification standards for the trades?"

It is my firm belief that the development and application of journey-level qualification standards for the preservation trades should be on a par with the application of the proposed professional qualification standards. They should support progress toward gaining the respect that people on the job who do the labor of historic preservation now